



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

XVII.—AN ACCOUNT OF A SOUTERRAIN DISCOVERED AT CURRAGHELY, NEAR KILCREA, Co. CORK. By R. B. BRASH, M. R. I. A. [Abstract.]

[Read June 24, 1867.]

ON Saturday, May 18, as Mr. Daniel Kane, farmer, residing on the townland of Curraghely, parish of Aglish, and county of Cork, was earthing potatoes in a field adjoining his house, his spade struck a flagstone, which, emitting a hollow sound, roused his curiosity. Having cleared the ground round it, he found it to be a flat slab, of about three feet, by two feet six inches; and, having raised it, he discovered a small well hole, of about five feet in depth, but partially filled with earth and *débris*; on clearing out this, he discovered a human skull, in an advanced stage of decomposition. In the side of this pit was found an irregular circular passage, of about two feet in diameter, and three feet in length, leading into a series of caves, excavated out of the Old Red Sandstone rock, of which this ridge of hills is composed. These were examined by the farmer and his men, with the expectation of finding treasure; but, from all the inquiries I have made, I am of opinion that no ornaments or implements of any metallic or other substance were found.

A few days after the opening of these caves the fact was communicated to Mr. Robert Day, of Cork, an indefatigable collector of Irish antiquities, who visited the spot, and made a careful examination. A few days subsequently, the same gentleman, accompanied by Dr. Caulfield, F. S. A., and Mr. Thomas Wright, F. G. S., paid them another visit, the result of which was published in the "Cork Constitution." Nothing, however, was found, excepting some portions of bone, horse teeth, and charcoal. On the first of June I visited the caves, which I found situated in an open field, on the summit of a hill, about two miles north-west of the Kilcrea station of the Cork and Macroom Railway. I fortunately met the occupier of the land on the spot, who kindly assisted me in my examinations, and gave me every information respecting their discovery; having also with me one of my office assistants, and lights, I was enabled, though not without some difficulty, to get a plan and measurements of the excavations, which I now submit for the inspection of the Academy. By an examination of the plan it will be seen that the whole series of chambers are quite irregular and without order, no two being of the same form or dimensions. The well hole at the mouth of the entrance on my visit was broken down, and without shape, from the number of persons who had visited it. The entrance faces nearly east, and is a circular hole of twenty inches diameter, and three feet in length, through which you force yourself into the chamber marked No. 1, which is in length fifteen feet, the width four feet seven inches, and height four feet, as shown by a cross section, taken on the line *c, n*, which shows the form of the cave, with its irregularly arched ceiling. This chamber, as well as the other cham-

bers and passages, is excavated out of the Old Red Sandstone, and being cut in the top of the rock, the material is of slaty texture, and consequently the interior surfaces are rough and irregular, and in some places soft and crumbling. The passage marked 5 leads into chamber No. 2. This passage is nine feet in length, and two feet in diameter.

The chamber No. 2 is of very irregular shape: its breadth, as shown on section line E, F, is four feet six inches, and height five feet. There is a recess, or side chamber, to the right, the extremity of which is closed up with earth and stones, where shown by the dark shading. Whether this closes a chamber beyond we had no mode of ascertaining. The passage No. 6 is five feet in length, and two feet in diameter at one end, and eighteen inches at the other; it leads into chamber No. 3, also of irregular form and dimensions; on the section line C, D, it is four feet wide, and four feet three inches high; it diminishes to a narrow passage, marked 7 on plan, which at its narrowest part is only sixteen inches wide, and can with difficulty be passed. Chamber No. 3 has also one of the side recesses, as in No. 2. Chamber No. 4 is, as will be seen, of a crescent shape; on the section line A, B, it is four feet wide, and three feet six inches high; on the right-hand side is also one of the before-named recesses, but deeper and more spacious; in its arched roof is a flue, or air shaft, nine inches square, and running to the surface in an oblique direction. This chamber also terminates in another narrow passage, eighteen inches in diameter, outside of which a pit has been sunk by Mr. Kane, so that a person can pass through all the chambers without being obliged to return.

The plan being laid down to scale, the dimensions of any part can be ascertained.

It will be seen by the sections that all the chambers are of an irregularly arched form: the recessed parts are also arched; and the intersections form rude groins. The floors are strewn with many large flat stones; and a quantity of hard vitrified material—in fact, regular clinkers—were found; as also many half calcined pieces of limestone, or what is known as the core of badly burned lime. The difficulty in an archæological point of view is the appropriation of this singular excavation, which is evidently not constructed upon any regular plan.

Being aware that most of our forts have artificial crypts beneath them, I made most diligent inquiry as to whether one existed on the site of the caves; but the universal answer was, that neither in memory nor tradition was a fort ever known there. I also examined the ground most carefully, but could not find in its configuration any evidence of such. A couple of hundred yards distant I found a fort cut through by a very ancient mountain road. Is it possible that two existed in such close proximity?

The gentlemen who preceded me in the examination of these caves appeared very doubtful as to the finding of the skull. I questioned Mr. Kane and two of his labourers very closely on the subject, and

they all declared that a human skull was found; that they had it in their hands; that it was in a very decayed state; that it was handled by such a number of the peasantry, and so knocked about, that it went to pieces before it had been seen by any reliable person: these men had evidently no object in stating an untruth, and they spoke with every appearance of honest veracity.

The finding of the clinkers and limestone cores may at first sight seem to indicate a modern date for these excavations; but we should be slow to accept such as evidence. Lime, for some considerable time back, has been the plentiful and common manure of the country; and it is quite usual to see the clinkers intermixed with the lime spread out on the fields. I am confident that Mr. Kane's discovery was not the first: doubtless the caves had been broken into on previous occasions; and the above materials had found their way in, being found plentifully intermixed with the soil. What, then, the uses of these caves were, and by whom excavated, will in all probability remain a mystery; the labour of excavating them in the rock, and the removing of the *débris* through passages that a slight man could scarcely drag himself through, must have been immense; the motive for doing so must have been strong indeed. The darkness and closeness of these caves, and the difficult communications from one to the other, preclude at once the idea of their ever having been habitations. The same objections will arise to the theory of their having been granaries or store-houses; men would not have devised such tortuous chambers, and so difficult of access, for such a purpose, when they could have constructed one simple receptacle of more capacity than all these put together. I am more inclined to the opinion that they were sepulchral. Some strange and universal belief respecting the bestowal of the dead existed in remote ages; it led to the construction of the Pyramids, those monstrous erections, that covered very small sepulchral chambers, entered by narrow and difficult passages. It led to the construction of the strange cemeteries of Etruria, whose intricate galleries, and narrow and difficult passages, as depicted by Dennis ("Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria"), bear a startling resemblance to the Souterrains of our own country. Again, could they have been used for strange and mysterious rites of initiation? Such were common amongst those Eastern races with whom the Irish Celt claims affinity. These rites—if we are to believe classic authorities—were always administered in caves, and the relics of them have come down to nearly our own day in the ordeals of St. Patrick's Purgatory, and the Scellig pilgrimages. I am not here advancing any theory. In our present stage of limited knowledge it would be premature; I am merely throwing out hints that may be kept in view, and pondered over, and which may be found useful in analyzing new discoveries.